

# Types of Characters and Character Traits

## STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify main and minor characters
- Identify character traits

## RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 4
- **Teaching Model**, from "Nadia the Willful," p. 5
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 6–7
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 8

You will also need:

- Transparency: **Graphic Organizer**, Character Traits

## Teach

1. **Characters:** Pass out the **Lesson Summary**, and go over the **Academic Vocabulary**. Explain that **characters** are at the heart of storytelling. Without them, there is no story.
2. **Teaching Main and Minor Characters:** Explain that not all characters are equal. Generally, action focuses on a **main character**. Usually, there are also **minor characters** who help move the action forward and help readers learn more about the main character.
  - Have students volunteer examples of the main and minor characters in books or movies. (*Sample: main: Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz; minor: Toto, Auntie Em, etc.*)
  - Point out that in the **Lesson Summary** there are two characters. The main character, Josh, and the minor character, Josh's grandmother.
3. **Teaching Character Traits:** Characters are revealed by their **traits**, or qualities. Use the **Lesson Summary** to review the four ways a writer can reveal a character's traits.
  - **Direct Comments:** In the first example, the narrator directly states that Josh is nervous.
  - **Physical Description:** In the second example, the narrator describes what Josh is wearing, his height, and his posture. Josh is tense, respectful, and unassuming.
  - **Character's Speech, Actions, and Thoughts:** In the third example, the writer uses Josh's words to show readers that Josh is hardworking and dedicated.
  - **How Others React:** In the final example, Josh's grandmother encourages Josh. You know that she thinks Josh is talented.
4. **Guided Practice:** Pass out copies of the **Teaching Model**, from "Nadia the Willful." The story is about Nadia, a young Bedouin girl, whose family lives in the desert. Her beloved older brother Hamed has recently died, lost in a desert sandstorm. Nadia's grieving father, Tarik, the sheik (or leader) of the tribe, has ordered that no one speak of his dead son.
  - Have students read the passage. Then show the Transparency: **Graphic Organizer**.
  - Ask a volunteer to find a quotation that reveals a trait about Nadia.

## TYPES OF CHARACTERS AND CHARACTER TRAITS, CONTINUED

- Have students complete the organizer with quotations and Nadia's traits or qualities.

**Sample Answers: Graphic Organizer**

- **Direct Comment**—*“Nadia, too, did as her father decreed . . .”*
- **Character Trait**—*Nadia is obedient to her father.*
- **Physical Description**—*(blank)*
- **Character Trait**—*(blank)*
- **Character's Speech, Actions, Feelings**—*“Without thinking, Nadia called to them, ‘That is not the way!’ Hamed said that first you jump this way and then you jump back.”*
- **How Others React**—*“‘Remember your father's promise of punishment!’ Nadia's mother warned when she heard Nadia speaking of Hamed. ‘Cease, I implore you!’”*
- **Character Trait**—*Nadia's is willful and daring.*

**QUICK CHECK.** Write the following questions on the board. Discuss answers with the class.

1. Who are the main and who minor characters? Explain. (*Nadia is the main character; her brothers, mother, and the women are minor characters who help readers learn about Nadia.*)
2. Nadia shares her memories of Hamed with others in the group. What quality or trait does this reveal? (*Nadia is brave. Her love for her brother overcomes her fear of her father.*)

**Practice and Apply**

Practice activities for describing character traits appear on pp. 6–7.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level and above-level students.

**Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet A**

1. **Thoughts and Feelings**—*compassion, sensitivity, embarrassment about feelings*
2. **How Others React**—*Vet sees through Will's outer shell and sees that Will is caring.*
3. **Direct Comment**—*embarrassment about his feelings*
4. **Speech and Actions**—*self-consciousness, kindness, gentleness*
5. **Main Character**—*Will is the main character. The action focuses on Will. **Minor Character(s)**—The vet; he moves the action along and interacts with Will. Smoky, the cat; Will's reaction to Smoky tells the reader about Will.*

**Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet B**

1. *Will cares about Smoky, but doesn't realize how much. His concern for the cat shows he is a caring person. The vet's comment also supports that Will has a caring attitude.*
2. *Most students will not be surprised at Will's gentleness toward Smoky, and may cite text clues that Will actually does care for the cat.*

## TYPES OF CHARACTERS AND CHARACTER TRAITS, CONTINUED

3. *Students might rate Will as caring (4 or 5) but not a lot; he cares but denies his feelings.*
4. *Students might rate Will as not knowing himself well (1 or 2); Will is surprised by his feelings for Smoky. The vet seems to know better than Will how Will feels.*

## Assess and Reteach

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Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should fill in the chart correctly and explain the relationship between quotations and character traits. If not, they need reteaching.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should have four answers correct or three correct and two partially correct. More errors indicate a need for reteaching.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Lesson Summary**. Focus on the examples, and relate them to the definitions in **Academic Vocabulary**. Brainstorm one or two new examples with students. Then have them complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 8.

### Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

1. *Main character: Manuel; minor character: the coach*
2. *b*
3. *a*
4. *c*